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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/916,241	07/25/2001	Jake de Vaal	130109.404	6840

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EXAMINER

CREPEAU, JONATHAN

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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1746

DATE MAILED: 12/03/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

cb8

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/916,241

Applicant(s)

VAAL ET AL.

Examiner

Jonathan S. Crepeau

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 25 July 2001.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-43 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1, 7, 21, 26, 38 and 40-43 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 2-6, 8-20, 22-25, 27-37 and 39 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application) since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.
a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121 since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 5, 6, 7.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Remarks

1. Claims 35(second occurrence)-42 have been renumbered as 36-43, pursuant to 37 CFR 1.126.

Claim Objections

2. Claim 23 is objected to because of the following informalities: in line 3, the phrase "does not cause exceed" is grammatically incorrect. Deletion of "cause" is suggested. Appropriate correction is required.

Double Patenting

3. The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the "right to exclude" granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. See *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Longi*, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); *In re Van Ornum*, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); *In re Vogel*, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970);and, *In re Thorington*, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent is shown to be commonly owned with this application. See 37 CFR 1.130(b).

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

4. Claims 1, 7, 21, 26, 38, and 40-43 are provisionally rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-26 of

copending Application No. 09/916,240. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because the claims of the '240 application anticipate the instant claims. See *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993). In particular, the “habitable environment” of the '240 claims anticipates the “ambient air” of the instant claims.

This is a provisional obviousness-type double patenting rejection because the conflicting claims have not in fact been patented.

Allowable Subject Matter

5. Claims 1, 7, 21, 26, 38, and 40-43 would be allowable if the above-noted obviousness-type double patenting rejection was overcome.

6. Claims 2-6, 8-20, 22-25, 27-37, and 39 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, or if the above-noted obviousness-type double patenting rejection was overcome.

7. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

Each of independent claims 1, 12, 21, 31, and 38 recites method or apparatus for measuring the oxygen concentration of ambient air in the vicinity of a fuel cell system, and ceasing operation of the system when the measured oxygen concentration falls below a threshold value. The art of record does not teach or fairly suggest these limitations. JP 8-185879 discloses a method in which nitrogen is flowed through a fuel electrode flow field and a decrease in

oxygen concentration on the air electrode side is used to detect gas leakage through the electrolyte. The reference is deficient because the oxygen concentration of the ambient air surrounding the fuel cell is not measured and the fuel cell is already in a shutdown state when the method is performed. JP 8-88014 discloses monitoring the oxygen concentration of an anode exhaust gas and shutting down the system when the oxygen level is above a specified value. However, this reference does not fairly suggest monitoring the oxygen concentration of the ambient air surrounding the fuel cell or that the system is shut down when the value is *below* a threshold value. JP 7-169481 discloses a fuel cell contained within a nitrogen-filled container (1), wherein hydrogen and oxygen levels within the container are monitored and the fuel cell shut down when either level is too high. However, this reference does not fairly suggest that the enclosure contains "ambient air" or that the system is shut down when the oxygen level is *below* a threshold value. Accordingly, the instant claims contain allowable subject matter.

Conclusion

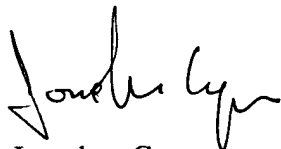
8. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jonathan Crepeau whose telephone number is (703) 305-0051 (prior to December 17, 2003) or (571) 272-1299 (after December 17, 2003). The examiner can normally be reached Monday-Friday from 9:30 AM - 6:00 PM EST.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Randy Gulakowski, can be reached at (703) 308-4333. The phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (703) 305-5900. Additionally,

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documents may be faxed to (703) 872-9310 (for non-final communications) or (703) 872-9311 (for after-final communications).

Any inquiry of general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0661.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Crepeau', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jonathan Crepeau
Patent Examiner
Art Unit 1746
November 26, 2003